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THE BLENHEIM RAPHAEL.

THE *Portfolio* states that the *Blenheim Raphael*, known as the *Ansidei Madonna*, has been purchased for the National Gallery at the enormous sum of £70,000. Great satisfaction has been expressed at this conclusion of the negotiations between the government and the Duke of Marlborough's trustees. It would have been a misfortune indeed if such a picture had been allowed to leave this country. We gave a great sum for the *Garvagh Raphael*, which was, indeed, relatively far dearer than this finer and more important panel. The composition of nearly life-size figures groups the enthroned Madonna with the Child on her knee; St. John Baptist and St. Nicholas of Bari on the other side. The color has the richness of Raphael while under the influence of Perugino; the style is of the early Florentine period, though, according to Vasari, the picture was begun in 1505, the date of that early fresco at Perugia, which foreshadowed the upper part of the learned *Disputa* in the Vatican *Stanza*. It was finished and signed in 1507, and placed in the chapel of the Ansidei family, dedicated to San Niccolò di Bari, in the Servite church of San Fiorenzo at Perugia. In 1764 it was replaced by a copy and bought by Lord Robert Spencer, who gave it to his brother, the then Duke of Marlborough. Lord Lansdowne was the central portion of the tripartite predella. The picture is in some senses unique, and in excellent preservation. For the National Collection is also secured, at the price of £17,500, the *Blenheim Vandyke* portrait of Charles I on horseback; and probably most people will feel the money well spent, although at Windsor is an equally fine equestrian portrait of the martyr king, and a replica at Hampton Court. The Rubens portraits of himself and his wife have been bought for a private collection abroad.

WORKS OF ART NOT "HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE."

WE learn from the *Magazine of Art*, "that about a year or more ago quite a ripple of excitement was raised in the art circles of Philadelphia by an attempt of the Assessors of Taxes to class works of art as taxable property, under the pretense that they were included in the term 'household furniture,' as used in the taxing act of April 29, 1844. This new construction, which had never occurred to any of the assessors before, was of course appealed from, but the Board of Revision of Taxes affirmed it. Mr. Lea, a well-known citizen of Philadelphia, thereupon carried the case into the courts, where it was argued before Judge Mitchell of the Court of Common Pleas. Judge Mitchell sustained the appeal of Mr. Lea, and the assessment was stricken off. The matter being one of general interest to all friends of art, we subjoin some extracts from the judge's opinion, as published in the *Legal Intelligencer*. 'Ornamentation,' says Judge Mitchell, 'is not furniture, though incidentally to its own purpose it may contribute to the idea of furnishing. 'The expression household furniture,' says Sawyer, J., in *Towns v. Pratt*, 33 N. H., 345, 'must be understood to mean those vessels, utensils, or goods which are designed in their

manufacture originally and chiefly for use in the family, as instruments of the household, and for conducting and managing household affairs.' Pictures are certainly not 'designed originally and chiefly for use in conducting and managing household affairs.' They are clearly not furniture in the artist's or even in the dealer's hands, as a table or a bureau would be in the hands of the manufacturer; nor would they probably be so considered, if bought and stored away in a closet or lumber room. Indeed, this view seems to have governed the assessors in the present matter, as we are informed that they did not assess as furniture, paintings, etc., hung in a separate room or gallery, intended for display only. Why, then, do they become furniture if hung in a parlor or other room not reserved exclusively for them but devoted to other household uses? Only, if at all, because in the progress of civilization and the development of the refining influences of art, there are now but few households, however humble, that are restricted to the bare necessities of life, and that have not some little contribution to the gratification of taste. In this sense pictures may be called household furniture, but this is not the popular sense of the word, nor is it the sense in which the legislature intended to use it. It lacks the idea of *household utility* that makes the basis of the definition of household furniture.... This conclusion is fortified by the construction universally put on the [taxing] act at the time of its passage. Some of the earlier American taxing acts used the word *household utensils*. . . and those which spoke of 'furniture' meant the same thing. For forty years the act has been understood and administered, by tax gatherer and tax payer alike, not to include paintings and similar objects. It is to be hoped that the exigencies of the State will never require the taxation of art, which all civilized men in all ages of the world have sought to encourage and develop; but if such a departure from established usage is to be made, it should be by a new and clear expression of the legislative will, not by a new reading of a statute nearly half a century old.' The assessors may now appeal to a higher court, but it is thought that they will not take such an unpopular step."

THE STATUE OF GEN. REYNOLDS,
PHILADELPHIA, SEPTEMBER, 1884.

JOHN ROGERS' equestrian statue of General Reynolds was unveiled before a great crowd and amidst great enthusiasm, on September 17th. It stands before the new City Hall, opposite to, and visible from the whole length of Broad Street; a superb situation, but owing to the vast size of the building and the width of the street even this large figure is quite dwarfed.

Reynolds was distinctively a Pennsylvanian. He commanded only Pennsylvania troops; he was killed on Pennsylvania soil, and though he fell on the first day at Gettysburg, it was largely owing to his vigor and skilful dispositions, that the great battle resulted in the deliverance of Pennsylvania from the invaders.

The orator of the day was the same Gov. Curtin whose forethought enabled him to offer to the President a trained

body of soldiers in the Pennsylvania Reserves, and those same Reserves were present in great numbers at the unveiling, and listened to the old governor extol their old commander, and fight over again their old battles.

It was probably the intention of the sculptor to represent the first discovery of the enemy at Gettysburg. The General reins in his horse and points with his arm outstretched to an object to the right of him. The horse throws up his head and raises his left fore-foot with a great deal of spirit, but in a way that entirely hides the rider from the spectator in front, and unfortunately it is from in front that the statue is chiefly seen. As we come down Broad Street we see nothing of the man but his outstretched hand, and it seems to be attached to the horse's ear.

Seen from the right side, the action is fine and the rider sits fairly well upon the horse, but his figure is very wanting in grace and there is too much made of the details of the drapery and accessories, which remind one too much of the famous Rogers' groups.

G—.

THE AMERICAN ART YEAR-BOOK.

THE Art Year-Book, for the year 1884, published by the New England Institute of Boston, has been received. In its mechanical features it leaves little to be desired, and is a worthy memorial of the eminent institution that fathers it. The various examples of reproductive art processes are extremely interesting, and alone make the book a most valuable one to every person interested in art. As a year-book of the art of the country, the performance hardly fulfills the promise implied by the title; yet as such things go, it will doubtless be considered amply sufficient by the general public. We are not disposed to be hypercritical, but prefer to encourage the publishers to increased efforts in future issues.

THE ARTIST AND SOCIETY.

Sir Edwin Landseer was endowed with great natural artistic gifts. Being so gifted, why was he not greater as a painter? The most practical lesson to be learnt from a study of his life is that even unflagging industry and natural gifts, high as they may place an artist in the distinguished society of his time, popular as they may make his works, do not alone secure for him the prize which the purest ambition of every artist ought to long for—namely, that by the thought, the feeling, the beauty, and the worthy translation of Nature's truths, to be found in their work, their pictures, as long as the paint lasts on the canvass, shall have an ennobling, a refining influence. That is the practical use of the fine arts, and there is no common sense in the pursuit of them, no reason for their existence as a serious element in social culture, if such an ennobling, refining influence is not their effect. Sir Edwin Landseer spent the hours away from the easel mostly in society, and mostly in what is called "the best society." It is a question interesting to consider whether even "the best society" supplies the best opportunities for receiving those impressions of nobility and beauty which are food for the truest art. Mr. Ruskin is supposed to have said: "Fit yourself for the best society and avoid it,"—and to the artist of the present day this is, we believe, sound doctrine. The social intercourse which arises out of what is called "society" does not, as a rule, feed the better part of the artistic temperament. "Society" in its modern form, is so much of an occupation in itself that it does not work in satisfactorily with a very absorbing labor, and the position of a lion, even in the most distinguished, fashionable society, must be distasteful at once to the dignity and to the modesty of a nature moulded in the finest fibre.—*The Spectator*.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor: Sir,—Before me lies a curious paper written fifty years ago by Thomas Sully and given by him to my father. In the announcement made in the advertisement, appears the germ of what afterward grew to be the Royal Academy. This was the first organized effort in England to afford instruction in art. Upon the Royal Academy our own National Academy was modeled, and in fact all our Art institutions and instruction were thence derived until within the last twenty years.

The following is the copy of an advertisement which was published in the weekly papers during the years 1758 and '59, in London:

Very truly yours,

GEO. C. LAMBDIN.

THOS. SULLY.

"For the use of those who study Painting, Sculpture and Engraving, will be opened on Monday March 6th next, at his Grace the Duke of Richmond's in Whitehall.

"A room containing a large collection of original plaster casts from the best antique statues and busts which are now at Rome and Florence. It is imagined that the study of these most exact copies from antiques may greatly contribute towards giving young beginners of genius an early taste and idea of beauty and proportion, which, when thoroughly acquired, will, in time, appear in their several performances.

"The public is therefore advertised, that any known painter, sculptor, carver or other settled artist, to whom the study of these gessos may be of use, shall have liberty to draw or model from any of them at any time; and upon application to the person that has the care of them, any particular figure shall be placed in such light as the artist may desire.

"And, likewise, any young man or boy above the age of twelve years may also have the same liberty by a recommendation from any known artist to Mr. Wilton, sculptor, in Hedge Lane. For these young persons a fresh statue or bust will be set once a week or fortnight, in a proper light for them to draw from.

"They will only be admitted from the hour of nine to eleven in the morning, and from the hour of two to four in the afternoon.

"On Saturday, Messrs. Wilton and Cissriani, will attend to see what progress each has made, to correct their drawings and models, and give them such instructions as shall be thought necessary.

"Nobody is to touch any of the gessos upon any account or to move them out of their places, or draw upon either them, their pedestals, or the walls of the room; any person offending in such manner will be dismissed and never admitted again upon any consideration.

"There will be given at Christmas and Midsummer annually, to those who distinguish themselves by making the greatest progress, the following premiums:

"A figure will be selected, and a large silver medal will be given for the best design of it, and another for the best model in Basso relievo.

"A smaller silver medal for the second best design, and one for the second best Basso relievo.

"The servant who takes care of the room has strict orders not to receive any money. It is therefore hoped and expected that none will be offered."

THE committee of the association of the French artists has decided to modify the programme of the next salon, relative to the vote for the medal of honor. This year, the department of engraving was the only one that received this award, and great dissatisfaction having ensued, the committee has decided to enlarge the electoral body by the admission, in addition to the *hors concours*, of the artists who have obtained honorable mentions in the preceeding salons; and further, it has been decided that the medal of honor will be adjudged by a plurality and not by a majority vote. This decision will be preceded by a preparatory vote which will decide upon the advisability of voting the medal of honor or not.